

LESSON 3: SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

INTRODUCTION

Involvement in prevention programs can only help to dissolve the drug problem. The following is a brief history of substance abuse prevention. Later in this lesson, telephone numbers for self-help groups and prevention organizations are provided.

PREVENTION HISTORY

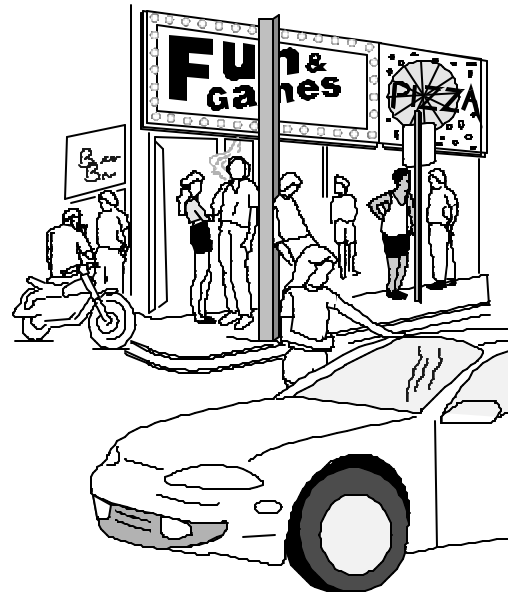
Historically, various organizations, communities, and governmental agencies founded drug abuse prevention programs based on the theory that people used drugs because they were ignorant of the consequences of such use. According to this theory, failure to recognize any negative effects of drugs resulted in neutral or even positive attitudes toward experimenting with drugs.

During the 1960s, drug education programs focused on providing information. Administrators of those programs often called them “fear arousal messages,” because they dealt with health and social consequences of drug use. However, these programs were somewhat ineffective because youths said that the messages themselves lacked credibility.

By the 1970s, social scientists began to address more personal factors that influenced drug abuse behavior among children and adolescents. Studies showed that a close association exists between drug abuse and a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and values, as well as other personality factors such as feelings of self-esteem, self-reliance, and alienation.

One prevention approach that grew from this research was affective education. Rather than focusing on drug abuse behaviors, affective education focused on the factors

associated with use. This approach attempted to eliminate the reasons for using drugs by creating a school climate that was supportive of students’ social and emotional needs. These programs often focused on training the students in effective decision-making skills. Students in these programs worked to clarify their values, analyze behavior consequences, and identify alternative behaviors.



Some of the other leading prevention approaches in the 1970s focused on alternative activities to drug use. These programs involved youths in community projects to reduce alienation, while others provided alternative opportunities for recreation, socialization, and informal education.

PREVENTION TODAY

Today, many schools have drug prevention programs. Sometimes these programs directly involve the students. For example, high school students might perform as “peer” teachers for 7th graders. Some studies have shown that prevention programs led by peers are more effective than programs led by adults. The health programs led by peers were more successful at preventing nonsmokers

from smoking. Through role-playing, students acted out situations requiring resistance to peer pressure. Students also made social commitments not to smoke or use drugs.



For most youths, substance abuse appears to be the result, in large part, of social influences. Thus, teaching youths to resist these influences is one approach to the prevention of use. However, not all youths use drugs for the same reason or respond to the same prevention approach. Thus, it may not be effective to focus on any single prevention approach, and it is important to explore multiple strategies.

CHANGING THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Successful drug programs change the social environment to reduce the risks of early drug use. These programs help to provide adolescents with the personal attributes and behavioral skills they need to choose non-drug alternatives, hopefully reducing their tendency to use stronger drugs in the future.

The social environment may provide the necessary conditions for drug use through

models and social supports, and through access to drugs. However, not all adolescents in high-risk environments choose to experiment or use drugs regularly. Intrapersonal and behavioral factors may be critical in determining the response to the environment through values and skills available to the adolescent to choose nondrug alternatives that meet their needs. These findings imply concentrating the prevention efforts on both of these factors, rather than on a single factor. They also imply that adolescent drug use is functional; thus, prevention efforts should focus on the functions served by drugs as well as on the more immediate predictors of drug use.

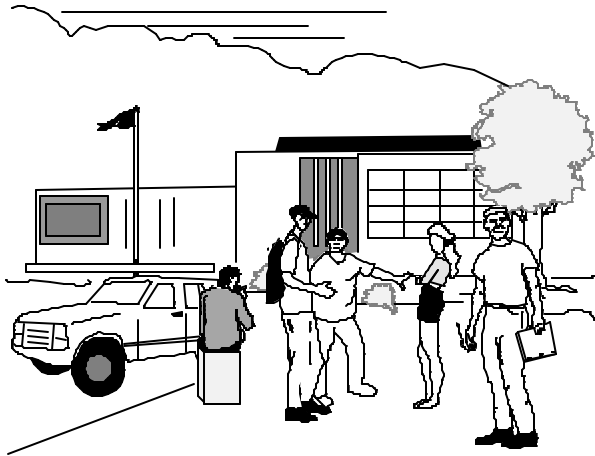


Some models suggest that prevention efforts should focus on this functionality and provide alternative behaviors for drug use rather than simply trying to suppress the underlying need or reason for use. These models often reward adolescents for choosing alternatives to drug use and suggest that such rewards should come from both peers and parents.

DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse is using natural and/or synthetic chemical substances for non-medical reasons to affect the body and its processes. For example, people sometimes

use amphetamines to stay awake when tired. If abused, drugs can also affect the mind and nervous system. For example, people sometimes use marijuana to change moods and to “get high.”



Used properly to treat a medical problem, drugs can correct imbalances in body chemistry, protect against disease, and relieve tension, fatigue, and pain. However, when people abuse drugs they can cause:

1. Health problems. Every year, hospitals treat thousands of people for drug-related accidents and mental and physical illness. Drug users can harm their health by losing resistance to disease. Plus, intravenous drug users may be exposed to AIDS and other serious diseases. More than 25,000 die every year from these accidents.
2. An addiction. When you need more and more of a drug to get the same effect, you risk an overdose, which can kill. The continued use of many drugs can lead to a physical and/or psychological dependence.
3. Legal problems. Stealing is often the only way to support an expensive habit. Law enforcement officials arrest about

2 million people each year for alcohol and drug related offenses. Possession of illegal drugs is punishable by heavy fines and prison sentences. A police record can follow you through life and eliminate certain career choices.

4. Financial hardships. From \$10 a week for cigarettes to \$100 a day for heroin, drug abuse can be an expensive habit.
5. Social difficulties. Instead of trying to work out their problems with other people, drug abusers often take more drugs as a “solution.”
6. Violence. Certain drugs can trigger violence against others.
7. Loss of friends. Once hooked, drugs come first — ahead of friendships or anything else.

The facts show that drug abuse is on the rise. Emergency rooms treated ten thousand users of crack cocaine in 1994. In 1985 the cocaine death rate was triple that of 1981. Crack is a \$30 billion a year business. Drug-related law enforcement agencies spend \$6.5 billion a year fighting crack.

Drug abuse has risen to epidemic proportions in most communities. It touches everyone — regardless of age, race, or economic background. Communities should use information on drugs to help its citizens better understand this serious problem affecting our homes, schools, and neighborhoods.

DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION

There are many ways in which you can become involved in drug abuse prevention. You might be able to volunteer at drug treatment and rehabilitation centers. Look in the phone book under “drug abuse” for infor-

mation and prevention programs. You may be able to find several local sources for preventive information. There are also toll-free numbers that provide information on drug abuse and prevention.

Many major hospitals have chemical dependency hospitals affiliated with them. These hospitals may offer professional treatment for alcoholism and drug dependency. Some may offer services such as seminars on drug recovery, depression, or anxiety and other individualized programs.

Help and/or information is available from many private and public agencies, facilities, and people. Drug treatment centers and clinics specialize in treating people with drug problems. Hospitals treat on an in- or out-patient basis. Mental health centers can treat people with drug problems by dealing with underlying problems. Public health agencies and social service agencies can give practical advice, make referrals, etc. Halfway houses provide residential treatment for those with drug problems.

If you need help with a cocaine problem, call the help line: **1-800-COCAINE**, or volunteer to help others with their drug problems and help to promote prevention programs.

The Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP) promotes and distributes prevention materials throughout the country. OSAP also supports the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) and the Regional Alcohol and Drug Awareness Resource (RADAR) Network. To learn more information on alcohol and other drugs, write or call: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: Information Services; P.O. Box 2345; Rockville, MD 20847-2345; **(301) 468-2600**.

ALCOHOL ABUSE

With over 157 million drivers and 105 million drinkers in the United States (in 1990), it is no wonder that people who drink and drive have become the major safety problem on our highways. Approximately 50,000 people die each year on U.S. highways, and alcohol is a factor in at least half of those deaths.

Alcohol can cause a feeling of relaxation and often an unreal sense of cheerfulness. Because of its widespread use, many people do not consider alcohol to be a drug or even dangerous. And, it can be very dangerous. The following list represents just a few of the serious side effects of alcohol. It can:

- Increase loss of body heat, giving a false feeling of warmth while actually decreasing the body's temperature.
- Affect a person mentally and physically, even with one drink.
- Contribute to loss of coordination and slurring of speech.
- Produce changes in personality and mental functions.
- Loosen inhibitions, causing intensification of feelings (such as anger and sadness).
- Impair clear thinking and judgment.

People who mix alcohol with other drugs multiply the effects of the drugs (known as the synergistic effect). Many drugs interact with each other in harmful ways — consequently, mixing alcohol with other depressants may lead to accidental deaths.

ALCOHOL ABUSE PREVENTION

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a worldwide group of men and women who help each other maintain sobriety and who offer to share their recovery experiences freely with others who may have a drinking problem. The AA program consists basically of “Twelve Steps” designed for personal recovery from alcoholism. The organization functions through almost 73,000 local groups in 114 countries. Several hundred thousand alcoholics have achieved sobriety in AA, but members recognize that their program is not always effective and that some may require professional counseling or treatment.

Look for Alcoholics Anonymous in any telephone directory. In most urban areas, a central AA office can answer your questions or put you in touch with AA members. If AA is not in your local directory, write the General Service Office, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station; New York, NY 10163.

Al-Anon is a worldwide organization that offers help to families and friends of alcoholics. Members receive support through a mutual exchange of experiences about how an alcoholic has affected their lives. Alateen is a fellowship of young Al-Anon members, usually teenagers, with someone else's drinking problems affecting their lives. Young people come together to share experiences, strengths, and hopes with each other as they discuss their difficulties. They can also encourage one another to learn effective ways to cope with their problems.

To contact the nearest Al-Anon or Alateen Group, call the local Al-Anon Information Service (Intergroup) in metropolitan areas, or write to Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters; 1600 Corporate Landing Pkwy., Virginia Beach, VA 23454.

There are many other places that people can get help for problems caused by alcohol. They can talk with family, friends, a school counselor, or a doctor. Look in the yellow pages under “alcohol” or “alcoholism.” Use referral services and get information provided by the local affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism (**1-800-NCA-CALL**). Remember, it is important to seek help and support for people with drinking problems.

At least 22 states have established formal programs for citizen-reporting of drunk drivers. Oregon has a toll-free hotline and a governor who, at one time, displayed a red star on his car for every drunk driver he reported. During 1982 and 1983 — the first two years of Oregon's reporting program — tragic fatalities were the lowest in 20 years. Most will agree that everybody has to work together. The government cannot do it alone. In Nebraska, fatalities dropped 26 percent in the first year of its drunk driver-reporting program.

***DON'T DRINK
& DRIVE***



Call your police department to see if such a program exists in your area. If not, push for one. There are many other organizations working to get drunks off the roads. For specific information on how you can help, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) National Office; 511 E. John Carpenter Frwy., Suite 700; Irving, TX 75062-8187 or call **1-800-438-6233**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Drinking is the third leading cause of death in the United States — right behind heart disease and cancer.

“Know When to Say When,” which has been in effect since 1983, is a nationwide consumer education campaign developed by Anheuser-Busch that encourages consumers to be responsible when they drink. It aims at normally responsible, law-abiding citizens who only need reminders of their legal and moral obligations to themselves and others. The purpose of the campaign is to help create a climate that strongly discourages “situational abuse.” The campaign involves a series of television commercials, a movie, billboards, and newspaper advertisements which remind consumers not to overindulge.

“The Buddy System” is an education campaign aimed at college students and other young adults. It includes a short movie, brochures explaining the program, and posters. The program makes a strong point that friends should be responsible for each other and should help one another avoid drunk driving situations.

Other programs developed to avoid drunk driving situations include free or reduced-price taxi rides home to customers who are unable to drive safely, and designated driver programs. A group designates one person to refrain from drinking so that a safe ride home is available to the other members of the group.

Students Against Driving Drunk (SADD) is a student-run program that works to counteract peer pressure to drink and drive. The founder of SADD, Bob Anastas, suggests that teenagers call their parents if they or their driving friends have been drinking. Anastas

has found that such an agreement between parents and teenagers works. Since the founding of SADD in 1981, more than three million students in 6500 high schools in all 50 states have become involved in SADD chapters. The efforts of groups like SADD are beginning to have an impact.

In 1980, traffic accidents accounted for killing 12,214 Americans ages 16 to 21; in 1983, 9054. In 1980, 49% of drivers ages 16 to 21 killed in traffic accidents were legally intoxicated; in 1983, 47%. For information about the parent-teenager agreement, or about starting a SADD chapter at your school, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to SADD; P.O. Box 800; Marlborough, MS 01752 or call **1-800-886-2972**.

Each year in the United States, drinking and driving result in costs totaling more than a billion dollars for property damage, insurance, and medical expenses. Drinking and driving account for over 500,000 people being injured and more than 1 million people arrested.

GENERAL INFORMATION

There are better, safer, more rewarding experiences in life than using drugs. They involve doing something that you find exciting, satisfying, meaningful, and challenging. Some alternatives include sports, dancing, playing music, theater, volunteer work, tutoring, writing, reading, playing games, photography, or crafts. You can find out about other alternatives by asking organizations in your community about programs they offer. Check with schools, community colleges, adult education programs, YMCA, YWCA, Boys' or Girls' Clubs, libraries, etc.

Drug abuse prevention programs have evolved from the need for action and the need to reach the target school-aged population.

The result is a heavy reliance on school systems, use of academic time, and involvement of educators in implementation. Everyone has the opportunity to become involved in community efforts to make citizens aware of the drug problem and how to prevent drug abuse.

Concerning the fight against drunk drivers, there are many things that people can do to help. Your knowledge of the following tips can possibly save a life when you are in a position to influence family members, friends, or other adults who are planning and/or attending a social function that includes alcohol.

As responsible hosts, they should:

- Recognize that every social occasion does not have to include alcoholic beverages.
- Place limits on the amount available if alcohol is served. Estimate how much alcohol to have on hand based on the number of guests and the length of the party. As a guideline, plan on one drink per guest per hour; then, purchase only that amount.
- Provide other activities when serving alcoholic beverages. Drinking should not be the main purpose of any activity.
- Create a climate that respects individual choice by providing attractive non-alcoholic drinks.
- Be conscious of the drinking age and remember that serving alcohol to a minor is illegal.
- Serve snacks so that guests do not drink on an empty stomach and to slow down alcohol absorption.
- Create a climate that discourages overindulgence but assume responsibility for guests who overindulge. See that they get home safely by providing or arranging transportation or invite them to stay later or overnight.

- Keep a list of telephone numbers of emergency health care, police, and taxi services in case you have a problem.

As responsible guests, they should:

- Regard alcohol as the highly toxic substance it is; understand its effects on the body, brain, and thought processes.
- Set a limit on the consumption of alcohol that is well within their personal limits, remembering that this will vary from time to time.
- Eat while they drink — such as low salt snacks or a meal.
- If they have exceeded their limit, ask for a ride home with someone who has not been drinking.

As friends, they should:

- Discourage anyone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol from driving.
- Call a cab for anyone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol.
- Remember: A brief uncomfortable confrontation may save the life of a friend and others.

As concerned citizens, they should:

- Talk about the dangers of drinking and driving to those who are overindulging. Ensure they understand the dangers of drinking and driving, the effects of alcohol on driving performance, and the consequences of being arrested and convicted of driving under the influence.
- Be a positive role model. Their attitudes and behavior regarding drinking and driving will influence others, especially minors.

- Support education and prevention activities in their local schools.
- Practice other safety measures such as using seat belts and child restraints for protection from drunk drivers.
- Join an organization on the local, state, or national level that is working to educate people about the dangers of drinking and driving.
- Support strong laws and enforcement of those laws. Let government know your feelings.

The following is a list of numbers to call if you need more information on what you can do to help.

Hazeldon Educational Materials

1-800-328-9000

Alcohol Hotline

1-800-ALCOHOL

Youth Power (formerly Just Say No)

1-800-258-2766

Dare America (CA)

1-800-223-3273

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment

National Hotline

1-800-662-HELP

CONCLUSION

Become involved as an individual. Talk to your friends and neighbors about drugs. Ask them to join you in your community's attack on drugs. Reach out a helping hand to your community — join the fight against drugs and become a part of the solution. If you feel you need help to be sober and drug-free, try to be brave enough to call the telephone numbers provided in this chapter. If you know someone who needs help, be a true friend and pass these phone numbers along. Your assistance could save a life.